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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Strengthening of the United Nations system capacity for conflict prevention

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system capacity for conflict prevention" (JIU/REP/95/13-A/50/853, annex).

2. The Inspectors' report was taken into account in the preparations for the consideration by ACC of coordination issues in relation to peace-building, which were included in the agenda of the Committee at its first regular session of 1997.

3. In the context of this item, ACC addressed issues relating to resource mobilization and ways of achieving a better articulation between consolidated appeals for emergency relief and development-focused round-table and consultative groups. It also considered ways of reinforcing the system's overall capacity for early warning, building on existing arrangements, and of pooling all of the system's substantive capacities for analysing trends and factors that can lead to crisis situations.

4. An important dimension of the ACC discussions related to approaches to peace-building in country situations where, in addition to ongoing humanitarian and development activities being carried out by the organizations of the system,

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the United Nations itself is mandated to operate political programmes. ACC agreed on arrangements for strengthening coordination in such situations, including arrangements for the identification of specific peace-building activities, to be initiated by the relevant programmes, funds and agencies in accordance with their mandates, that can strengthen the overall political effort.

5. More generally, ACC members called for complementary actions by the United Nations system, in close partnership with other actors, to support country-level efforts at relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, and agreed upon the broad elements of a common strategic framework for response to, and recovery from, crisis, as part of the system's overall effort to help secure durable peace and pursue or restore sustainable development in countries in crisis situations. Arrangements were also agreed upon for sharing the experience gained and lessons learned within the system and by the international community at large in recent years in peace-building in crisis situations.

6. The outcome of ACC's discussions will be covered in greater detail in the annual report of ACC for 1997, for consideration by the relevant intergovernmental bodies.

ANNEX

Comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Inspectors are to be commended for choosing to address a subject as complex and important as "strengthening the United Nations system capacity for conflict prevention". In doing so, their goal was to advocate a comprehensive, system-wide conflict prevention strategy combining preventive diplomacy and "pre-conflict peace-building". They have built a strong case for such a strategy and the Secretary-General as well as the members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) share their assessment of the need for an integrated approach to conflict prevention. At the same time, they are less optimistic than the Inspectors are on the prospects for this integrated approach to become the norm in efforts to prevent internal and international conflicts.

2. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC believe that the Inspectors may have underestimated the legislative and political obstacles to conflict prevention, first among which is the ambivalence of some Member States towards United Nations involvement in the early resolution of disputes to which they may be party. While all Member States express support in principle for conflict prevention, in practice such support is often qualified by restrictions which relate either to respect of sovereignty or to financial considerations.

3. This is in spite of conflict prevention having impeccable legislative credentials. The Charter of the United Nations made the prevention as well as the removal of threats against international peace and security one of the priorities of the United Nations and a common responsibility of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretary-General, the International Court of Justice and even, as Article 65 may suggest, the Economic and Social Council. In resolution 47/120 of 18 December 1992, the General Assembly acknowledged that "timely application of preventive diplomacy is the most desirable and efficient means of easing tensions before they result in conflict" and emphasized "the need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in the field of preventive diplomacy, through, inter alia, allocating appropriate staff resources and financial resources for preventive diplomacy".

4. On 22 February 1995, in a presidential statement (S/PRST/1995/9) on the Secretary-General's position paper entitled "Supplement to An Agenda for Peace" (A/50/60-S/1995/1), the Security Council welcomed and shared the priority given by the then Secretary-General to "action to prevent conflict" and urged States "to support the efforts of the United Nations system with regard to preventive and post-conflict peace-building activities and, in this context, to provide the necessary assistance for the economic and social development of countries, especially those which have suffered or are suffering from conflicts".

5. In their report, the Inspectors refer to the major peace-keeping operations of recent years and contrast the high cost of deploying troops, providing emergency relief and financing post-conflict peace-building with the

comparatively low cost of preventive diplomacy. They also emphasize that no amount of assistance can redeem the human suffering brought by conflict, and that much of the human and financial resources absorbed by peacekeeping and rehabilitation might have, in other circumstances, been directed towards development.

6. The Inspectors then discuss the Secretariat unit which, in support of the Secretary-General, has primary responsibility for carrying out the preventive and peacemaking mandates of the United Nations: the Department of Political Affairs. They express the view that the Department's resources are inadequate for its mission and note that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 provided for the Organization to spend only 0.65 per cent of its regular budget on preventive diplomacy and peacemaking activities carried out by the Department.

7. In many cases, conflicts are a security as well as a political issue and ought to be addressed as such. The Inspectors have introduced a "comprehensive conflict prevention concept", which combines preventive diplomacy proper with what they term "preventive (pre-conflict) peace-building/preventive development". They give an impressive list of preventive development activities currently carried out by United Nations programmes, funds and offices (the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP)), specialized agencies (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) and the Bretton Woods institutions. There is, however, a fundamental difference between "preventive development", which is not directed specifically at the prevention of conflict, and "peace-building", which is carried out under a political mandate specifically to prevent the eruption or resumption of conflict.

8. The current and potential role of regional and non-governmental organizations in conflict prevention is addressed in the concluding section of the Inspectors' report. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC fully agree with the Inspectors on the importance of the contribution that regional organizations, individual Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and distinguished individuals can make towards the prevention or peaceful settlement of disputes and conflicts.

II. GENERAL COMMENTS

9. The Inspectors' report reiterates the generally accepted view that prevention is better than cure and that the United Nations would be more effective in discharging its responsibilities in the peace and security field if it improved its capacity to prevent conflict.

10. But the report could have analysed more rigorously the different forms of preventive action which are available to the United Nations. These include

preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment, preventive disarmament, preventive humanitarian action, preventive development and other forms of preventive peace-building. If the report had examined each of these in turn and identified the entity or entities within the United Nations system which is/are responsible for each of them, it would have provided a more adequate analytical basis for decisions on institutional changes or other matters which the Member States might wish to consider in order to enhance the System's capacity for preventive action.

11. The report did not bring out the essentially political nature of preventive action. This is stated in the case of preventive diplomacy but not in the case of peace-building, to which the report devotes much attention. The concept of peace-building can be understood only if it is made clear: (a) that the activities which it comprises (economic and social development, respect for human rights, institution-building, better governance, democratization, etc.) all have an intrinsic value of their own as means of improving human wealth, health and happiness; and (b) that what gives them added value as peace-building in "countries in special situations" (to quote UNDP's very apt phrase) is the political contribution they can make to preventing the eruption or resumption of conflict.

12. Nor does the report make any reference to the essential task, which falls to the Secretary-General, of monitoring the political effects of agreed preventive activities, especially in the all-important peace-building field.

13. Against this background, the comments below focus on three factors which, as the Inspectors to some extent recognize, call into question the practicability of their recommendations: (a) a perception, among some Member States, that preventive diplomacy might infringe upon their sovereignty or run counter to their national interest; (b) a lack of resources; and (c) the lack of integrated, rather than coordinated, conflict prevention strategies within the United Nations system and within the larger international community.

A. Sovereignty and non-interference

14. While the Inspectors allude to Member States' concern regarding sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs, they may not take into account its practical consequences. In paragraph 151, for instance, they assert that "the United Nations should be prepared to play a more active and constructive role in helping countries in pre-conflict situations to choose the appropriate development strategies".

15. The problem here is less with the programmes, funds and agencies, which are fully prepared to help such countries, than with the criteria for determining that a situation is "pre-conflict" and with the willingness of the countries concerned to be described as being in such a situation. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia comes to mind as an exceptional instance of a country that was not shy of requesting assistance to prevent the possible spillover onto its territory of a war being waged in the region and was more concerned with its peace and stability than with a possible perception of foreign interference. The more common phenomenon, however, is that one of the parties will not accept

efforts by the United Nations to prevent conflict because it is opposed to "internationalization" of the situation.

16. States may also be reluctant to acknowledge that they are in a pre-conflict situation when the potential conflict is internal, as are most of the conflicts in which the United Nations is currently involved. It may take years of fighting and devastation before the parties accept that there may be other than military solutions to their dispute.

17. The report does not give due weight to opposition from Member States to the very idea of the United Nations collecting and analysing information, especially political information, for early warning purposes.

18. Member States' difficulty in reconciling their desire to prevent conflicts with their concern over possible encroachments on their sovereignty is reflected in the General Assembly's call, in resolution 47/120, for the United Nations to "combine confidentiality and transparency". Confidentiality is central to preventive diplomacy. To try to combine it with the transparency of public reporting and debate would make it impossible to find common ground and identify possible compromises between parties without one of them losing face.

19. The then Secretary-General's proposal in 1993 to establish integrated offices in some countries was resisted by a majority of Member States. What was primarily an effort to improve coordination, enhance efficiency and reduce costs was perceived as an effort to obtain political reporting on Member States' internal affairs. This and other precedents render academic several of the Inspectors' recommendations.

20. So does the protracted and inconclusive debate still going on in the sub-group on preventive diplomacy of the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on a Supplement to An Agenda for Peace. After two years of discussion, no consensus has been reached on even the most general definition of preventive diplomacy. Some States have even contended that the United Nations cannot enter into preventive diplomacy unless it has the consent of all States concerned, while others maintain that this should be left to the Security Council.

B. Resource considerations

21. The Inspectors describe their "comprehensive conflict prevention strategy" as being comprised of two elements: (a) preventive diplomacy as a specific and well-defined subprogramme; and (b) "preventive (pre-conflict) peace-building/preventive development" (recommendation 8). Both elements entail financial as well as political considerations.

Preventive diplomacy

22. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC are grateful to the Inspectors for calling attention to the paucity of the financial and human resources available to the Secretariat for preventive diplomacy and peacemaking. (The tasks to be performed in the two activities are essentially the same, the difference being that in one case they are performed before a dispute has turned

into armed conflict and in the other they are performed after the conflict has broken out.)

23. The Inspectors rightly make the point that prevention is not peace on the cheap. Conflicts will not be prevented through positive thinking, exhortations to the parties to settle their dispute peacefully or some magical sleight of hand, but as a result of the coordinated efforts of many individuals in national Governments, non-governmental organizations, regional organizations as well as the United Nations. The decision to achieve reductions which the General Assembly took when adopting the programme budget for 1996-1997 has led to cuts in the resources for preventive diplomacy and peacemaking. In the circumstances, it is unlikely that the level of resources will increase.

24. Under the subheading "Peacekeeping: from exponential growth to downward trend?", in paragraphs 18 to 26 of their report the Inspectors seem to propose an artificial trade-off between peacekeeping and conflict prevention. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC caution against any implication that resources for conflict prevention should come at the expense of those for conflict management. In cases where prevention fails, the United Nations must be organized and staffed to implement other options, including peacekeeping, should this be mandated by the Security Council.

25. In other words, even though conflict prevention is preferable, this does not absolve the Organization of the responsibility to manage conflicts which may break out. Peacekeeping and conflict prevention are two separate instruments, appropriate to different types of situation. Both have been chronically under-resourced. It would be inadvisable to reduce the Organization's capacity for one of these instruments in order to enhance it for the other. Both instruments, in all probability, will continue to be required.

"Preventive (pre-conflict) peace-building/preventive development"

26. The Inspectors' recommendation No. 8 "clearly and fully [to] integrate [the notion of preventive (pre-conflict) peace-building/preventive development] into the substantive as well as operational programmes of the United Nations system as a complement to preventive diplomacy" is welcome, provided that it is not understood to mean that all development activities are considered to have a "preventive" purpose. In many countries, the United Nations Development Programme assists Governments in developing programmes and projects that include better governance, civil service reform, national reconciliation, peaceful political and economic transition, resettlement and reintegration of uprooted populations, repair of physical infrastructure, etc. These activities form part of UNDP's country programmes as agreed with the Government of the country. They would be considered to be preventive development only if they had the specific political purpose, also agreed with the Government, of contributing to the prevention of the outbreak of a new conflict or the recrudescence of an old one. As noted above, the concept of prevention applies only in cases where it has been determined by the Secretary-General that in a particular country there is a need for the United Nations system to undertake certain developmental or humanitarian activities for a specific political purpose. In such cases the activities are carried out by the United Nations bodies which have the

specialist expertise required, after discussion with the Secretary-General and with, of course, the agreement of the Government concerned.

27. The Secretary-General is increasingly associating the programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations system as a whole with his peacemaking efforts, so that they have the opportunity of commenting in advance on preventive roles which may be contemplated for them. The current peace process in Guatemala is a case in point. It nevertheless has to be recognized that the "root causes" of conflict are more complex than the Inspectors' focus on economic and social factors would suggest. Ethnic, religious and other such factors do not respond well to prevention by development only. And even in those cases where the roots of a conflict are unquestionably economic and social, the fact remains that the conflict itself is political.

28. Another question which arises is whether the country or countries concerned are ready to accept the Secretary-General's view, possibly endorsed by the General Assembly or the Security Council, that they are "in a pre-conflict situation". Only if they are can the United Nations engage in a "comprehensive conflict prevention strategy". The Member States' debate on the United Nations medium-term plan for 1998-2001 revealed that the concept of post-conflict peace-building (let alone that of pre-conflict peace-building) is not universally accepted.

29. There is also the question of whether donor countries would be willing to finance the major investment that such a comprehensive strategy implies. The cost of preventive peace-building as envisaged by the Inspectors could be very large since many current situations threaten to develop into conflict, without there being any way to predict which ones will actually do so. This notwithstanding, the Secretary-General and the members of ACC tend to be more optimistic than the Inspectors and believe that additional funds would be made available for preventive development to Governments which show the political will to take the steps necessary to prevent conflict, whether internal or external.

C. Coordination and integration

1. Within the United Nations system

30. Much progress has been made in recent years in improving coordination between the Secretariat, the programmes, funds and offices of the United Nations, and the specialized agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions. Such coordination, notably with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, is now standard procedure when it comes to planning and supporting the rehabilitation of a country during and after a multifunctional peacekeeping operation. It is required not only for reconstruction and economic rehabilitation but also for the security and political aspects of peace-building, such as demobilization, disarmament, the professionalization of the police and security forces, institutional reform, enhancing governance and public administration, human rights monitoring, electoral reform, land transfers, etc.

31. The members of ACC have played a significant role in improving coordination within the United Nations system. Coordination is required both in normal times of peace and stability and when a country's security is under threat from outside or from within. The difference between these two scenarios is that in the latter case the provision of development assistance and other such services provided by the United Nations system in situations of normality will contribute best to the prevention of conflict if they are delivered under an overall political mandate, assuming, of course, that the Government concerned agrees and there is a legislative mandate from the Security Council or the General Assembly. Responsibility for coordination therefore has to be entrusted to an official who has a political mandate emanating from the Secretary-General under the authority of the General Assembly or the Security Council.

32. This presupposes the readiness of Member States to authorize and fund a comprehensive strategy to prevent conflict. In this context, the Inspectors make the point that the UNDP Executive Board has already earmarked 5 per cent of core resources (approximately $50 million) for preventive and curative activities in 'countries in special situations'. Many other United Nations programmes, funds, offices and agencies are engaged in preventive activities that would benefit from being integrated into a preventive peace-building strategy with a clear political mandate.

2. Outside the United Nations system

33. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC support the Inspectors' call for the enhancement of concerted preventive action by the global community. They do not believe, though, that the United Nations should always act as the centre and the catalyst of joint efforts. The United Nations cannot deal with every dispute and conflict and in some cases it would welcome the readiness of other actors to take the lead in the prevention, management or resolution of conflicts. There are many cases where, for historical, geographical, political, operational or financial reasons, a Member State, an ad hoc group of Member States, a regional organization or arrangement, an eminent person or an NGO are better placed than the United Nations to lead efforts to prevent conflict or negotiate peace. In such cases, the United Nations is normally ready to support the efforts of those who are in the lead and to coordinate the system's contribution to their efforts.

III. COMMENTS ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1. Within the context of strengthening the functions of the main organs of the United Nations in conflict prevention, the General Assembly may wish to consider such ideas as:

(a) Identifying practical ways and means of involving the General Assembly in preventive diplomacy;

(b) Instituting regular meetings of the Security Council to review conflict-prone situations;

(c) Determining how the Economic and Social Council might contribute to better anticipation of economic and social problems likely to result in a crisis, and develop strategies to deal with economic and social causes of conflicts;

(d) Creating an ad hoc Working Group or a small committee on conflict prevention, composed of members of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in order to facilitate handling of potential crises in a comprehensive manner; and

(e) Using the International Court of Justice in the peaceful settlements of disputes, including the so-called "chambers" jurisdiction or informal mediation by the Court.

34. Recommendation 1 is addressed to the Member States. As mentioned in paragraph 20, the slow progress made in discussions in the sub-group on preventive diplomacy of the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on a Supplement to An Agenda for Peace does not bode well for an early implementation of subparagraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) of the Inspectors' recommendation. Regarding subparagraph (d), the Secretary-General wishes to recall that in An Agenda for Peace his predecessor had recommended that, in accordance with Article 65 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council should invite a reinvigorated Economic and Social Council to provide reports on those economic and social developments that may, unless mitigated, threaten international peace and security. As for subparagraph (e), it coincides with the former Secretary-General's own recommendation in the section of his original report on "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277-S/24111) which addresses the role of the International Court of Justice.

RECOMMENDATION 2. Member States may wish to consider attaching a higher priority to preventive diplomacy and allocating increased resources to this function, inter alia, through shifting resources from low-priority areas.

35. Again, this is a recommendation addressed to the Member States. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC welcome it. In paragraph 32 of the Supplement to An Agenda for Peace, the then Secretary-General suggested two solutions to the chronic underfunding of conflict prevention activities, and in particular the deployment of small field missions for preventive diplomacy and peacemaking. One was to include in the regular budget a contingency provision for such activities. The second was to enlarge the existing provision for unforeseen and extraordinary activities and to make it available for all preventive and peacemaking activities and not just those related to international peace and security strictly defined. Both solutions were rejected. More recently, a provision in the amount of $70 million for prospective preventive diplomacy and peacemaking missions was proposed in the outline of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. This was not accepted by the General Assembly.

36. The only reservation of the Secretary-General and ACC regarding recommendation 2 relates to the invitation to Member States to increase resources for that function "inter alia through shifting resources from low-priority areas". They welcome this approach but point out that it will be

viable only if Member States give clear guidance to them on which mandated activities may be considered to be in "low priority areas" and may therefore be terminated or significantly reduced in scope. Member States have not yet been able to agree on which activities should be so defined. Until they do so, the recommended decision to increase resources for preventive diplomacy will not be implementable.

RECOMMENDATION 3. To provide for a more sharpened focus on preventive diplomacy, and more effective fulfilment by the Department of Political Affairs of the relevant tasks, and subject to the increase in the Department's resources as suggested in recommendation 2 above, the Secretary-General may wish to undertake the necessary structural refinement of the Department, including, as an option, the setting up of a specific conflict prevention unit, as appropriate. Major functions of the Department of Political Affairs thus strengthened in the area of preventive diplomacy would be:

(a) Carrying out an action-oriented analysis of situations which could possibly degrade into conflict, by consolidating internal and external information;

(b) Proposing to the Secretary-General appropriate actions with a streamlined channel of communications (access) to facilitate early action;

(c) Assisting the Secretary-General in carrying out preventive diplomacy actions (such as fact-finding, mediation and good offices missions) decided by him and/or mandated by the Security Council;

(d) Providing secretariat services to the Security Council on preventive diplomacy issues; and

(e) Serving as a "core" for small field missions, if and when necessary.

37. As acknowledged by the Inspectors in paragraph 93 of their report, the Department of Political Affairs does not see the merit of setting up a specific conflict prevention unit within the Department. It believes rather that early warning and policy analysis should be a basic part (perhaps the basic part) of its regional divisions' task of monitoring situations, assessing indicators and proposing policy options. In that regard, its Policy Analysis Team, whose main functions are described in paragraphs 92 to 94 of the Inspectors' report, is a more effective and less costly mechanism than a conflict resolution unit would be. It should also be pointed out that the Department's regional divisions and its Policy Analysis Team already carry out the functions listed under subparagraphs (a) to (e) of recommendation 3. Adding a specific conflict prevention unit to the Department's regional divisions would result in duplication of work and unnecessary costs.

RECOMMENDATION 4. As a supplement to the measures to be taken at headquarters levels, the Secretary-General may wish to consider setting up, when necessary and feasible, in the United Nations regional centres (venues of the regional commissions), small preventive diplomacy teams. These teams would assess the evolution of situations that could possibly degrade into conflicts and recommend appropriate measures to/or through the Department of Political Affairs. As

necessary and in accordance with instructions of the United Nations Headquarters, they would undertake appropriate actions, including establishing links with respective Governments, parties, factions and groups involved in order to defuse or head off conflicts. The teams should be assisted by Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (political issues) and United Nations Resident Coordinators serving in countries of the respective regions (economic, social and humanitarian issues) as well as by the regional commissions and other United Nations offices as appropriate.

38. Lack of funds has severely limited the ability of the Department of Political Affairs to send the staff of its regional divisions on assessment missions. In the view of the Department, this would be a less costly way of meeting the need identified in recommendation 4 than setting up preventive diplomacy teams at United Nations regional centres as recommended by the Inspectors. The latter option would in any event be opposed by many Member States, not only for financial reasons but also for the political considerations which were evident in 1993 when the General Assembly considered the proposal put forward by the then Secretary-General to establish integrated offices in certain Member States.

39. In any case, the Inspectors' suggestion that such teams should be assisted by the local United Nations Resident Coordinators would be difficult to reconcile either with the Member States' view that developmental and humanitarian activities in the field should not be mixed with political activities or with UNDP's need to work in close cooperation with Governments. Like peacemaking and peacekeeping, preventive action requires impartiality between potentially hostile parties.

RECOMMENDATION 5. The humanitarian early warning system (HEWS) of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs may constitute the core of a consolidated United Nations early warning capacity, which should be placed by the Secretary-General in the Department of Political Affairs to serve as an "analytical support and assessment system" of the preventive diplomacy activities described in recommendation 3. [It is understood that "HEWS" in new locations can also function for humanitarian early warning purposes, to which reference is made in a new JIU report on the involvement of the United Nations system in providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance[1]]. After relocation of HEWS to the Department of Political Affairs, the possibility of financing the system from the regular budget should be considered, having in mind recommendation 2.

40. HEWS is a humanitarian early warning system. If it were to be transferred to the Department of Political Affairs, it would have to be reconfigured into a political early warning system. The Department of Political Affairs is prepared to work on such reconfiguring and operate the system as long as it comes with adequate and regular financing under the regular budget.

41. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC wish to dispel any illusion that one system can simultaneously serve purposes as different as humanitarian and political early warning. Both the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs believe that HEWS has great value and regret that it appears that its generous funding by one Member State cannot be

continued or absorbed into the regular budget. They also point out, however, that the indicators and predictors relevant to humanitarian emergencies and political crises are not always identical and that the humanitarian imperative does not necessarily coincide with the political imperative. There are humanitarian emergencies which do not lead to conflict and there are conflicts which do not lead to humanitarian emergencies.

42. Recognizing the need to react quickly to impending humanitarian crises, the General Assembly included early warning in the mandate of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as set out in its resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991. In order to discharge this responsibility, the Department began work on HEWS in the summer of 1993 and has turned it into an effective tool that has increased the humanitarian community's capacity for prevention, preparedness and timely, coordinated response to emergencies. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC believe that the humanitarian community ought to develop and maintain its own capacity for early warning. Given that each has its own responsibilities, both the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs must use their own networks, tools and skills to assess developing situations each from the vantage point most relevant to its mandate. This does not, of course, preclude joint consultations where each department shares its own sectoral information and analysis with the others.

43. Early warning information is discussed by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on a regular basis. The three departments have developed a framework for coordination that involves weekly meetings where issues of concern to one department can be brought to the attention of the others. Each of the three departments may also request ad hoc meetings at the Desk Officer or Director level. Within the Department of Political Affairs itself, early warning functions are carried out by the regional divisions, supported by the Policy Analysis Team and in consultation with the system's funds, programmes and agencies. If HEWS were transferred to the Department of Political Affairs, it would have to function as a complement to the existing system and procedures rather than to replace them.

44. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC are of the view that moving HEWS would not solve the problem of financing. They agree with the Inspectors' recommendation that an important and ongoing activity such as early warning should be financed from the regular budget, and they hope that the means will be found to allow the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to keep the proven and tried HEWS.

RECOMMENDATION 6. The Secretary-General should ensure that reporting to the Headquarters on the country situation (potential/imminent problems) by the field offices of the United Nations operational agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, etc.) as well as by UNICs and the field missions of United Nations departments/offices (Department of Political Affairs, Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights) is regularized and the relevant information and analysis is channelled systematically to the Department of Political Affairs. In this connection, availability of on-line computer facilities with compatible hardware and software as well as a standardized format of reporting would

expedite necessary processing. Furthermore, it is important to have close coordination and cooperation among departments/agencies and to come up with preliminary field level judgements on situations in a given spot, through continuous monitoring.

45. It would certainly make the work of the Department of Political Affairs easier in the early warning and preventive diplomacy fields if the United Nations information centres and the field offices of the programmes, funds, offices and agencies of the United Nations system could report to the Secretariat on current and potential conflicts in their areas. However, they are all precluded by their mandates from reporting on political matters and attempts to amend their mandates may be opposed by many Member States. (At the same time, in paragraph 132 of their report the Inspectors note that United Nations Resident Coordinators are required to report routinely to the Administrator of UNDP on conditions that have or could have an adverse effect on operational activities for development and that these reports may provide the early, local indicators of potential complex emergencies. While such reports can provide useful information to the Department of Political Affairs in its monitoring and early warning capacities, they have to be used with caution in view of UNDP's need to maintain close working relationships with the Governments concerned.

RECOMMENDATION 7. Member States, United Nations specialized agencies, regional organizations, NGOs and other sources such as academic and research institutions should also be invited to provide relevant information and analysis to the Department of Political Affairs.

46. As stated in paragraph 45 above, the specialized agencies are precluded from reporting on political issues in their host countries. Member States, on the other hand, are at liberty to provide the Secretariat with information which they deem useful for the prevention of conflicts. Many already do so. At the same time, Member States' views on these matters are sometimes influenced by their national interests and must therefore be analysed and assessed with care. This makes it all the more important for the Department of Political Affairs to be provided with an analytical capacity commensurate with the volume of information to be analysed and processed. As for academic and research institutions, the Secretary-General and the members of ACC agree with the Inspectors' recommendation that they should be invited to share their information and analysis with the Department of Political Affairs. Many already do so and all desk officers in the Department are under standing instructions to be in regular contact with the leading academic experts in their fields.

RECOMMENDATION 8. The notion of preventive (pre-conflict) peace-building/'preventive development' must be clearly and fully integrated/incorporated into the substantive as well as operational programmes of the United Nations system as a complement to preventive diplomacy. In this context, the organizations of the United Nations system, individually and collectively, should review existing policies, programmes and programming processes, and sharpen the focus on alleviating root causes of conflicts. Special attention should be paid to building indigenous capacity (including the capacity of women and youth) for problem-solving/conflict prevention through enhancement of training programmes in these areas. This could include not only

establishment of training/conflict resolution centres at the national and local levels to provide training grounds, but also development of conflict prevention mechanisms by launching, for example, a global pilot project on conflict prevention by drawing a wide participation of women and youth in the peace agenda. Furthermore, within the context of capacity-building, specific sectors should be targeted, which would include judicial and legal structures, institutions and instruments aimed at the protection of minorities and minority cultures, and public service broadcasting.

47. Recommendation 8 and the conceptual and political problems which it poses are discussed in detail in paragraphs 26 to 29 above. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC welcome this far-reaching recommendation and express the hope that Member States will support such a strong mandate for conflict prevention.

RECOMMENDATION 9. The governing bodies of the United Nations system, particularly those of development agencies, may wish to consider strengthening their respective organizations' programmes and activities addressing root causes of conflicts, thus enhancing the role of these organizations in conflict prevention.

48. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC concur with recommendation 9, while underscoring that not all agencies have conflict prevention in their mandates and that such programmes and activities should be designed and implemented in close coordination with the Secretary-General through the Department of Political Affairs.

RECOMMENDATION 10. Inventories, case-studies and evaluation reports on conflict prevention policies, programmes and projects should be prepared, and lessons/success stories be synthesized and disseminated, as appropriate and upon request, to programme countries, donor agencies, United Nations system organizations, regional organizations, financial institutions, NGOs, parliamentary groups, academic institutions for effective utilization and feedback.

49. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC are aware of the importance of publicizing United Nations successes and of the need to learn the lessons of past operations. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has set up and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is setting up a Lessons Learned Unit, while the Department of Political Affairs has instituted a policy of systematic end-of-mission debriefings of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. The possibility of combining the activities of the three Departments in this field is under study. However, in contrast with peacekeeping or humanitarian operations, conflict prevention and peacemaking do not always lend themselves to publicity, even ex post facto. While UNDP, UNHCR, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other programmes, funds and agencies have a mandated obligation to report on their valuable preventive activities, as detailed in the Inspectors' report, it would sometimes be difficult to publicize preventive efforts of a more political nature. To do so would breach the confidentiality that is necessary if the confidence of the parties is to be gained and could thus jeopardize future preventive efforts by the United Nations.

RECOMMENDATION 11. In order to enhance United Nations system activities addressing root causes of conflict, the United Nations and specialized agencies should more extensively use the United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) and experienced national officers.

50. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC strongly encourage the use of United Nations Volunteers and are ready to use National Officers when this can be done without compromising the impartiality of the United Nations or the necessary confidentiality of its efforts in the preventive field.

RECOMMENDATION 12. The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, should initiate and take the lead of inter-agency discussions on the subject of conflict prevention, to enhance and promote the relevant activities of the United Nations system and coordination thereof.

51. The Secretary-General endorses this recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 13. At the field level, existing programming procedures such as the 'Country Strategy Note' could be actively utilized both as a mechanism to identify critical problems, including the degree of a country's vulnerability to potential crisis on a medium- to long-term perspective, and as a frame of reference for system-wide coordination and cooperation in addressing problems identified.

52. The Secretary-General and the members of ACC believe that any political input in the country strategy note should be restricted to those factors in the political situation of the country that might hinder or jeopardize development. Any attempt to deviate from that policy would be resisted vigorously by some countries.

RECOMMENDATION 14. Closer collaboration between development agencies and humanitarian as well as human rights agencies should be ensured both at the field and at the headquarters level, in order to coordinate activities (programmes) and to optimize the use of the resources available to them.

53. This is an ongoing priority of the Secretary-General and the members of ACC, who will continue efforts towards closer coordination within the United Nations system.

RECOMMENDATION 15. To enhance concerted action of the global community - which is an essential requirement to ensure effectiveness of preventive efforts at the international, regional, national and local levels - the United Nations should act as a centre and catalyst of joint efforts, to cultivate an effective division of labour between all the actors involved (specialized agencies, regional organizations, national institutions, NGOs, as well as parliamentary groups, academic institutions, etc.) taking into account their knowledge, experiences, potentiality and comparative advantages.

54. As stated in paragraph 33 above, the Secretary-General and the members of ACC welcome the Inspectors' call to enhance concerted action by the global community towards the prevention of conflict. At the same time, they caution

that the United Nations is neither equipped nor staffed to act as "a centre and catalyst of joint efforts" to prevent or resolve each and every dispute. Other actors - Member States acting individually or collectively, regional organizations, eminent persons or NGOs - are welcome to take the lead in preventive efforts whenever they have a comparative advantage.

IV. CONCLUSION

55. In their report, the Inspectors present their account of the existing capacity of the United Nations system for conflict prevention and make a case for what they call a "comprehensive conflict prevention strategy concept" and for the need to address the root causes of conflict. However, their emphasis on "preventive development" may have caused them to give undue prominence to only one of the various types of preventive action which the United Nations system can undertake and to move the security and political dimensions of conflict prevention into the background.

56. The real question is not perhaps how to strengthen the already strong capacity of the United Nations system for conflict prevention, but how to put that capacity into actual and effective use. This depends on two factors: (a) a recognition by Member States that, far from infringing upon their sovereignty, activities such as early warning, preventive diplomacy and peace-building seek to restore the authority and legitimacy of States confronted with threats to their security and stability; and (b) a willingness by the membership as a whole to make adequate resources available for those activities.

57. Since the end of the cold war, there have been signs that Member States may be becoming more favourably disposed to the prevention of internal and international conflicts than they had been before. They may rest assured that the United Nations system is fully prepared and stands ready to respond to any needs they may express for its help in preventing conflicts which could affect them.

Notes

[1] See "The involvement of the United Nations system in providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance" (JIU/REP/95/9-A/50/687, annex).